

MUELLER'S EMPHASIS: RUSSIA'S GREATER THAN TWO EFFORTS TO INTERFERE IN THE ELECTION

I want to parse a few things that Robert Mueller said in his press conference today.

First, he departed from the language of the report – which said the investigation “did not establish” a conspiracy – and said “there was insufficient evidence to charge a broader conspiracy.” The meaning is the same, but the emphasis is different. There was, obviously, a good deal of evidence that there was a conspiracy between Russia and people in Trump’s camp. Just not enough to charge.

That’s significant for two other reasons. He ended his statements by saying, “there were multiple, systematic efforts to interfere in our election.”

Now consider how he described Volume One, with that “insufficient evidence” language:

The first volume details numerous efforts emanating from Russia to influence the election. This volume includes a discussion of the trump campaign’s response to this activity, as well as our conclusion that there was insufficient evidence to charge a broader conspiracy.

Everything in Volume One is, by this description, an effort by Russia to influence the election. That means Mueller is treating the third part of the volume, describing the links between Russian-linked individuals and the Trump campaign, as “an effort emanating from Russia to influence the election.” (The report itself

states that the office selected which outreach to include.) That appears to mean that Mueller considers the things included in the volume – including the multiple Trump Tower Moscow dangles, the Kislyak outreach (including to JD Gordan), Konstantin Kilimnik's outreach, and even Dmitri Simes' advice (the latter of which surprises me, somewhat) – as a third systematic effort to influence the election.

He's not saying Trump's people conspired in that effort (though especially with Page and Manafort, the report is inconclusive on their willingness to participate). But he is suggesting that that outreach constitutes further "systematic efforts to interfere in our election."